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day. I do not mean to imply, indeed, that Prof. Briggs's treatment is entirely inconsistent with the historical treatment. My regret is merely that the historical point of view has been obscured.

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*THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE, A STUDY IN ITALIAN
POPULAR COMEDY, BY WINIFRED SMITH.
STUDIES IN ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LIT-
ERATURE. NEW YORK. THE COLUMBIA UNI-
VERSITY PRESS, 1912 IN 8°XV—290 PAGES.*

The book is a timely one, since the 'Commedia dell'Arte' has thus far had scant attention from English scholars, in spite of its connection with English drama. The greater part of the material is not new, having been drawn from the various Italian and French works, which treat the subject in more detail. However, the chapter devoted to the 'Commedia dell'Arte' influence in England, is an original contribution in the main, and together with an appendix of English plays revealing Italian motifs, indicates fresh and thorough investigation on the writer's part. No little skill is shown in choosing and presenting the striking aspects of the 'Commedia dell'Arte', so that a distinct impression of the genre may be gained even by the least initiated. The treatment of the various character-types, the inclusion of effective extracts and of summaries of the most important scenarios, all make for an interesting exposition of the subject. It is perhaps to be regretted that some one of the more important scenarios was not included entire, so that the reader might realize fully the slender basis upon which the actors worked. It is these very illuminating chapters, however, which give the book its somewhat too popular character, although that character is suggested throughout by the style, which should perhaps be more impersonal or more colourless, for so technical a subject.

The Table of Contents by no means does justice to the amount of material in the book, yet it would be almost impossible to give adequate clues, because in almost any one chapter, the mass of detail is too heterogeneous to be subordinated clearly to the subject in hand. The heaping-up of comparatively extraneous information frequently destroys the effectiveness of the argument involved, and confuses the main line of thought, which is sufficiently interesting in itself to be allowed clear passage.

A long chapter of the book is devoted to the discussion of theories of the origin of the 'Commedia dell'Arte'. Here the author has a new theory to propound:—namely that the 'Commedia dell'Arte' is a composite of popular and literary elements, the product of the sixteenth century Italian actor class, who as "mountebanks" of the previous generation played the 'Commedia' in embryo. In order to place this theory, Miss Smith feels it incumbent upon her to sweep aside all previous ones, instead of utilizing any of them as pre-requisite to her views. She apparently ignores the fact that the majority of scholars in this field have not been primarily concerned with sixteenth century influences upon the 'Commedia dell'Arte' but with proving that the dramatic tradition was continuous from the time of the Atellane farce through more fully developed Roman comedy; or by way of the strolling players to the 'Commedia dell'Arte'. Nor does she seem to realize that their emphasis upon similar characteristics in the Atellane farce and Roman comedy or in a mediaeval profane drama on the one hand and in those of the 'Commedia dell'Arte' on the other, is subsidiary to this general purpose. She does not, to be sure, actually discuss the existence of such a continuous dramatic activity, but she implies her disbelief in it by tracing the Commedia back only to the fifteenth century. Yet in accounting for familiar motifs and types of the 'Commedia dell'Arte' and in outlining them in the farce performances of the "Mountebanks", she inevitably does take an earlier dramatic art for granted, although she has already vitiated the theory by her earlier attitude towards it and its supporters. Her investigation of these mountebank representations has genuine interest, but it fails of its mark because she treats as hostile the very critics who should be of service to her, and in so doing, she confuses her argument.

In the treatment of the new material, that is, the 'Commedia' influence in England, it is noticeable that there is a manifest care not to lay too great emphasis on questionable evidence and that the conclusions drawn are very fully supported. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the work as a whole. In tracing the development of the 'Commedia dell'Arte', Miss Smith is tempted, when the number of facts accumulated by earlier investigators is insufficient for her needs, to bridge the gap with mere hypothesis, on which she founds a number of arguments,—a dangerous method for a subject in which every point is disputed.

The book, in spite of the shortcomings suggested, leaves the impression of wide reading, keen intelligence and of a power of restraint not always exercised. As an introduction to an

unfamiliar field, it is distinctly valuable and will be found to be a convenient epitome of necessary information for untechnical study of the field it covers.

A few statements needing guarantee of further detail and some, clearly incorrect, should be noted:

- (1) p. 9 "A Spanish desperado in the oldest known scenario"
- (2) p. 10 "Some of Zanni's names point back to a remote antiquity"
- (3) p. 11 "Such Pulcinelli are mentioned as long ago as 1363"
- (4) p. 15 "The Commedia, at least in its beginnings, an amusement for men only"
- (5) pp. 120, 125, No references or names are given for plays described.
- (6) p. 219, note—"Campardon gives 1595 as the earliest date for the establishment of the Foires, but theatrical performances did not begin there till 1660."

The incorrect dates are

- (1) p. 61—1565 for 1566—No authority given
See Scherillo, 'La Commedia dell'Arte' Chap. VI, p. 140
- (2) p. 68, footnote—The date of Ariosto's "Cassaria" is cited as 1488 (no authority given)
See *Commedie de L.Ariosto*, Milano, Ed. Gonzogno 1883—Prefazione (Olindo Guerrini) p. 8—1497.

c/ Prologue of 'Cassaria' in verse.

- (3) p. 111, A play in which Vittoria figures as an actress, dated before 1578 because Vittoria left the Company of the 'Gelosì' at that time.

No authority stated.

See D'Ancona, *Origini del Teatro II* p. 467 where an original document is cited to show that Vittoria was a member of the Company as late as 1585, but not in 1593.

- (4) p. 116, footnote. Scenery in Rome as early as 1518 See Gardner, *King of Court Poets*, p. 329, Vasari VIII, 227, where it is claimed that it was used there before 1514.
- (5) p. 151, Borromeo's modifying the prohibition of plays, 1580 for 1583.

No authority stated, but in discussing the question in another place, Miss Smith quotes Scherillo—(p. 62 note)

See Scherillo, *Commedia dell'Arte* Chap. VI, p. 156.

- (6) On page 145, a quotation of six lines from Nichols, *Progresses etc. of Queen Elizabeth, I*, 304, shows several inaccuracies in transcription.

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